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ABSTRACT

Since 1971 dramatic changes have occurred in the field of adult education, especially in competency-based adult education and life skills/adult performance level curricula. In the 1080's, adult education will have reduced federal aid. Other changes may include a return of operational authority to the states and localities, a redefinition of the federal role as one of support, and a need for increased private sector involvement in education. While the child population is declining, older Americans are looking to adult education to solve problems caused by technological advancements and social and economic changes. Education must change to provide for lifelong learning and to rediscover the human aspect of productivity by preparing individuals to accept a new level of responsibility for their own development, for advancement of their communities, and for development of the economy. A proposed three-part strategy to accomplish these goals includes (1) preparing citizens who understand the changing context of the 1980's; (2) making changes in educational institutions that are necessary to support the citizenry in tasks of personal, family, community, and economic development; and (3) improving the basis for the cooperation of institutions at local and regional levels. (YLB)

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ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION — A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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*Delivered by Dr. Worthington before the joint national conference of the Adult Education Association/U.S.A. and the National Association of Public Continuing Adult Education at Anaheim, Calif., October 30, 1981

Adult and Continuing Education—A National Perspective

Thank you for that gracious introduction. It is a special honor and privilege for me to have the opportunity to join you this afternoon. I remember during my previous tour in Washington that I spoke to your conference in 1971 in Los Angeles. At that time I urged adult educators to agressively assert their leadership at the State level and expressed the hope that in the decade of the 70's every community of 5,000 or more citizens would have a minimum of one full-time adult education coordinator. Responsible for meeting the educational needs of all adult citizens, this coordinator would stimulate and coordinate the resources of business and industry, public and private school systems at all levels, voluntary and community service organizations. Another goal I expressed for the 70's was to establish broadly based community adult education councils in communities of 5,000 citizens or more. These councils were to include providers and consumers of adult education services, such as representatives of radio, press, television, museums and libraries, business and industry, public and private schools, voluntary and community services organizations, and the general public. A council of this nature could assist an adult education coordinator in utilizing community facilities and deliverying comprehensive educational services to all adult citizens. While I cannot report that these goals have been realized in every community of 5,000 or more, it is clear from my travels around the country — and from those attending this conference — that communities have moved significantly in this direction. And, I might add, that even faced with tight budgets we will remain far ahead of where we were in 1971.

And in that same speech in Los Angeles I also called for completion of Adult Performance Level standards, extension and validation of the Adult Performance Level to include all regional and ethnic differences, and the development of curriculum, methodologies,

and alternative personnel training resources and models to educate every adult to the required Adult Performance Level.

I am happy to report that all of these goals have been achieved. Among the accomplishments that grew out of the Adult Performance Level study and related competency-based adult education research are—

The Adult Education Act was amended in 1978 to reflect a functional literacy intent for the program.

States continue their program development and teacher training commitment to competency-based adult education and life skills instruction ($20 million in the past four years).

Adult Performance Level-based assessment instruments have been developed and published by the American College Testing Program under contract with the University of Texas.

As you have no doubt observed in the exhibit area of this conference, at least a dozen major publishing houses now publish life skills/adult performance level curricula and a series of professional books and monographs are available on competency-based adult education.

Your own NAPCAE and the Commission on Adult Basic Education have established competency-based adult education committees and numerous presentations and publications on competency-based adult education surface at their national and regional conferences. Both groups have published journals devoted exclusively to competency-based adult education.

The State of California, under the able leadership of Donald McCune and Xavier Del Buono, led the way with the States of Texas and New York in extending and validating performance levels for their own States and in developing curriculum and methodologies for programs in those three States.

So we see that while many dramatic changes have taken place since 1971 in the entire realm of education, some of the most dramatic changes have occurred in the field of adult education.

At the outset, you are undoubtedly interested in a legislative update. As you know, the Congress passed and the President signed into law education appropriations, including $100 million for the adult education State-administered program for spending during fiscal year 1982. This was level funding for the program — one of the few programs not affected by rescissions.

Now to the 1982 budget for 1983 program operations — At this time the full floor of the House has passed a budget of $100 million for adult education, while the Senate Subcommittee for Appropriations has recommended $90 million. There may be a compromise or the President may be prepared to veto an appropriation bill that is too far over the 12 percent reduction requested.

On August 13, President Reagan signed the budget bill that will affect most of the current Federal education programs. Title V, The Omnibus Education Reconciliation Act of 1981, will be of major interest to this group.

Amendments to the Adult Education Act include an extension through Fiscal Year 1984, spending ceilings of $100,000,000 for the remaining three years of authority, and repeal of section 317 providing special adult education services to Indochina

refugees. The Adult Education Act does remain a categorical program under a separate statute.

Twenty-eight elementary and secondary education programs are consolidated into a block grant to the States under Chapter II of the Reconciliation Act. Among the merged programs are basic skills, community education, career education, consumer education, teacher corps, and teacher centers. The authorization is $589,368,000 for each of the Fiscal Years 1982, 1983, and 1984. State educational agencies have direct administrative authority for all the programs consolidated. However, 80 percent of each State's allotment must be passed on to local school districts.

The picture is not too bright for Title I of the Higher Education Act. This Title, as reauthorized, consolidated three existing programs -State Postsecondary Education Planning, Education Information Centers, and Continuing Education. The appropriation for 1981 was $15 million; $12.8 million was rescinded. The remaining funds were used for State administration for continuing education. The Administration has requested no funds for 1982 nor has the Congress appropriated any.

We must, however, bear in mind that education in general is facing some dramatic changes in the immediate future. From a Federal perspective we are in a transitional period — between the expansionary Federal role in education during the past two decades and the more constricted world of the eighties. Political realities and the Administration's plans for economic recovery will have a major impact on education at all levels. Rightly so, education must bear its fair share in the reductions of inflationary Federal spending. In the long run, constantly rising costs are more detrimental to education than the projected spending cuts. In the near-term we must all make certain sacrifies to help put the country back on the track toward economic recovery.

In the Department of Education we are giving close attention to the Administration's overall position on public education. Central to this position is the return of operational authority — and indeed, most judgment calls — to the States and localities; in other words, to phase out Federal intrusion into day-to-day educational matters and to redefine the Federal role as one of "support" or "honest brokering." This is how the Office of Vocational and Adult Education will operate — I should say, co-operate with you — from now on.

You might well note one other significant departure from past policies: This Administration sees the private sector as being much more important to the total educational enterprise than any other Administration in my memory. The Adult Education Program has moved in this direction through the expansion of its delivery system that was called for in the 1978 amendments to the legislation. We must make use of all systems and facilities, whether they be in our schools and colleges, in business and industrial plants or establishments, in churches, in town halls, in hospitals, or in the kitchen of a rural home. This is not unfamiliar ground for this audience — for adult education is certainly a model leader in this respect.

The changing demography of our Nation's population clearly points to a declining child population in the school systems. Evidence is clear that adult education is growing at a 12 percent per annum rate compared with a 2 percent growth in elementary and secondary education. Adults in the United States are looking more and more to adult education as a means for the individual to solve immediate problems. Technological advancements coupled with social and economic changes create growing pressures on individuals. These pressures constitute a challenge to adult education and adult educators.

All of us should lift our sights to see challenging opportunities that lie within our present situation. Let me begin with a little perspective. I am sure that all of us would agree that education has been one of the great success stories of American society. The Founding Fathers saw education as indispensible to a democratic society and planted the seeds of a vital system of public education in every community and State. A century ago, as the nation began to take giant steps forward in its industrial and agricultural development, the Morill Act (Land Grant Colleges) and then later the Smith-Hughes Act and amendments (Vocational Education) brought into being a great partnership between education and economic development. Through vocational education, career and professional education, and the service-oriented public universities, educational institutions became indispensible in providing the educated manpower, the basic knowledge, technology and extension assistance necessary for a modern economy. All of us in this room are the beneficiaries and the heirs of this achievement!

Most of us have spent our career in a climate of growth, achievement and optimism. As we consider the changing climate, I hope none of us put aside a deep sense of pride in what we have accomplished. But we live in a fast changing world and must be prepared to make the kinds of adjustments our predecessors made a century ago.

Let me spend a few moments on the changing context of the 80s. Whether you read Alvin Toffler or Daniel Yankelovich we all know we live in a time of accelerating cultural change that impacts us as individuals, that impacts our institutions, and that impacts our society. To keep our own lives intact, to keep our institutions vital and useful, and to keep America strong and productive are challenges few of us were prepared to meet. I don't need to remind this audience that the notion

of terminal education is obsolete. But I think most of you would agree that our schools and colleges are still basically organized to provide a terminal education. Lifelong learning has a foot in the door, but clearly, education must become more future-oriented than it is.

After the euphoria and optimism of recent decades we find ourselves in a sober and humbling time. The American economy has moved from first place to tenth[1] place among industrial nations. I leave it to the historians to explain the decline. The highest priority for all of us is to reverse the slide and get us on the high road to productivity again. It is clearly the highest priority of this administration. One of the opportunities for educators, and especially adult educators, lies in the rediscovery of the human aspect of productivity. Having emphasized capital-intensive high technology as the best route to successful economic competition in the post-war era, the idea that people can also make a difference is so obvious that we ought to kick ourselves for forgetting it for a time. But its back on the top of the agenda, witness the rash of books and articles on the subject just in the past few months. As Fortune suggests, we must all learn to "work smarter".

As the recent books on Japanese productivity point out, the human dimension of productivity is not only determined by the work-related skills, but also by the attitudes, values, motives and commitment the larger culture builds into the citizenry. As Walter Lippmann, Margaret Mead, and more recently Daniel Yankelovich and a host of other commentators have pointed out, the work ethic has diminished as the authority and effectiveness of our traditional "instructional" agencies,

[1]Source -- Lester Thoreau, MIT, Economist, Author - Zero Sum Society.

such as family, church and community, have diminished. Notions of entitlement and self-fulfillment took root during the affluent 60's to the detriment of personal, family, and economic stability.

Clearly, education must help the citizenry to develop the understanding, attitudes, values, motives and commitments necessary to realize all our goals in an effective and realistic manner. If we all need to learn to "work smarter" it is essential that we all learn to "live smarter" as well. Getting and keeping it together is a new task, not only for young people, but for all of us throughout the lifespan.

If I am correct in this assessment of the changing context of the 80s, then I think we can find a basis for the decline of both basic and higher education in the perception of business leaders, politicians and the citizenry-at-large. Americans expect their schools and colleges to prepare people for better jobs and careers and for the good life. Given the economic and social realities, educators become natural targets for the disappointments and frustrations of the people. But it is high time for all of us, and especially educators, to understand that our schools and colleges were built on the foundations provided by family, church and community. And this was essential to its success in the first half of this century. Qualities of hard work, inventiveness, risk-taking, team work and the capacity to delay present pleasures for future reward must be augmented and reinforced in our classrooms.

Clearly there is a nostalgia for a simpler and more coherent past. But there is no point in looking backward except to guage our future accomplishments. If we are to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 80s, we must prepare the citizenry to understand the new realities, and we must persuade each individual to accept a new level of responsibility for their own development, for the development of their communities, and for the development of our economy.

How do we accomplish these goals? I propose a three-part strategy.

1. First, every citizen needs to understand the changing context of the 1980's. I believe we adult educators must join with others in orienting all 220,000,000 Americans to the changing context of their lives. We have begun to understand the economic realities but we have yet to understand the scope of change in our personal lives, our families, our churches and communities. Once these are also understood, the imperative to take hold of our lives in a self-directed manner and actively engage in the additional tasks of personal, familial, community and economic development will become clear.

In pilot work now going on in a major eastern city, (Philadelphia) a simple approach has been devised to provide such understanding and to orient people to the expanded tasks of self-directed development. Through a series of seminars — appropriately called "Gateway Seminars"— adults of all socio-economic and educational backgrounds are learning to better understand the societal changes they have been a part of the past twenty to thirty years. From there, they move on to a new sense of how they can direct their own development, contribute to the development of those in their families, their communities, and to the larger development of our economy and our society. The evidence is that there is great hunger among all of these adults for such understanding and an eagerness to pursue the tasks of development as a consequence. In similar activities in our institutions and through the media we need to give all Americans a crash course in the changed context in which we are living, and in understanding the new developmental tasks required and the opportunities available to us. Within a few years a new consciousness and commitment could be evident in the nation.

2. Second, all the institutions involved in the learning and development process need to make those adjustments necessary to support the citizenry as they engage in tasks of personal, family, community and economic development. While this is an obvious assignment for educators in the nation's schools and colleges, it is not for them alone. Clearly we need to strengthen the capacities of parents and families to become more effective. Churches and other community agencies can play a strengthened role. The workplace is increasingly a learning environment. Indeed the growth of human resource development programs in the corporations is based on a developmental premise that goes well beyond the formal educational institutions. Additionally, we need to shape the telecommunications revolution now unfolding so that it supports those developmental objectives as well. One can easily be critical of the media for their failure in these aspects. But where are the educators who are seeking a chunk of the telecommunications action to extend their missions in assisting the citizenry in their personal, family, community and economic developments.

3. Third, once the institutions come to some common understandings of the emergent realities and the tasks, there will be a much improved basis for working together at local and regional levels. Many of us will remember that school, family, community and church used to work much more closely on behalf of shared objectives. In our modern jargon, every community had its own "system of human learning and development". As Buckminster Fuller would say, there was a lot of "synergy in the system."
That old tradition-based "system" is gone, to be sure. But it is both possible and essential to rebuild the "system" once we all understand what we have

to do. I am not talking about new super-organizations as we tried in the 60's to coordinate a host of institutions. What I am talking about is voluntary cooperation among institutions who work for common and shared understandings and commitments to make the development process work!

It may seem to some of you that, like the Man from La Mancha, I have an impossible dream. No, my friends, I am not a dreamer. I am a very practical sort. The three part strategy I have proposed does not require a super-organization. It does not require new institutions. And it does not require new resources. It does require a new understanding and a renewed commitment to direct our resources and energies to new and emerging conditions and tasks.

Like other major innovations in the past there are often straws in the wind that precede the full-blown idea. Keep in mind that Thomas Jefferson anticipated the land grant and vocational education innovations in his plan for the University of Virginia decades earlier.

As I mentioned earlier the business investment in "human resource development" has anticipated the expansion of education from cognitive and skill training to the affective, interpersonal and organizational dimensions. As all of you adult educators know better than I, notions of adult development through the various stages of living are stretching our concepts of education. Just this year Arthur Chickering has written a landmark book in which college education is redefined in terms of developmental theory and research. The burgeoning field of "community education" comes at the strengthening of community in new and effective ways. Increasingly adult basic education is carried on in a developmental framework with proper attention to the other contexts of living. Parent, consumer, and self-care education stretch the present model in other ways. The rediscovery of the

church congregation as a "learning community" is another recent and happy development. The Department of Education's Division of Adult Learning Programs is currently exploring new joint initiatives with other agencies. Under my administration we will explore the learning potential of all settings where people spend their time at any age in life.

It only takes another small step to move from these straws-in the wind to the larger strategy that I have proposed. All that is required is that the handwringing stop and we sensitize ourselves to the new and urgent needs of people, their communities and the larger economy. We truly have a once-in-a-century opportunity to revitalize our institutions and to provide new dimensions of service that are desperately needed by the larger society. For those of you who are concerned about declining student markets, I don't need to point out that acceptance of this broader mandate leads to new markets and new sources of income as well.

I suspect that my message is not nearly as earthshaking to adult educators as it may be to educators in the other segments of the educational establishment. You have been nipping at the heels for decades. Now your time has come. Rise to the occasion and help us all to <u>live and work smarter</u>!